

Week 1 - Let us Adore - P Theresa

Mary's Magnificat Magnifies Lord

December 9-10

Good morning and welcome. RECAP; VOH. Sponsored all 17 kids that Cindy brought PTL. If you still want to sponsor you can through their website! Thank you for your generosity and support.

Today begins our Christmas Series entitled ADORE!

As we enter this Christmas season, we want to explore a theme that echoes through the corridors of time – Adoration. For many of us, when we hear that word during the holidays, we immediately recall a very popular Christmas carol - Oh Come Let us Adore him! But does it really mean to Adore Christ?

OG: How would you define Adoration? In what ways do you Adore Christ the King?

The announcement of Jesus' imminent arrival sparked a unanimous response of worship. It wasn't mere anticipation; it was a recognition of the extraordinary, an acknowledgment that something divine was unfolding in the midst of humanity.

This Christmas, we invite you to join us for a three week mini series as we dive into the essence of adoration and explore why the birth of Jesus goes beyond mere festive cheer and prompts us to bow in awe. This is an amazing church, worship is always so powerful. But, our hope is an even greater intensification of worship for the New Born King.

Today's message, entitled "Let Us Adore," unravels the significance of Mary's song. It is a timeless anthem of exaltation found in Luke. In the melody of her words, we see similar themes found in Miriam's departure from Egypt and Hannah's rejoicing at Samuel's birth. These songs form a harmonious chorus that passes from generation to generation, celebrating a God who saves and uplifts the lowly.

Mary's song is often referred to as The Magnificat, meaning "my soul magnifies the Lord". It can be heard in Catholic services as well as Lutheran and Anglican. Her song has been copied into the Book of Common Prayer and for most Protestant churches, is sung during the Advent season.

Although I was raised Catholic, I do not recall ever hearing the Magnificat. My father, however, would probably remember it because he was an altar boy when the Catholic service were spoken entirely in Latin. As we look at The Magnificat, we can grow in our understanding of the inner essence of worship. The title itself is the essence of worship.

Therefore, we learn that worship is the Magnifying of God which is to show how magnificent God is. John piper says it like this,

"Worship is all about reflecting the worth or value of God." - John Piper

As we look at the Christmas narrative we will answer an essential question of worship.

OG Question: What experience reveals and, more importantly, expresses, how great and glorious God is? What is going on in the heart and mind of a person that expresses adoration and exaltation of the Lord?

In order to understand this with Mary's story, we must look at the entire story as a whole. So if you want to read along in your bibles you can open up to Luke 1 and we will be starting at verse 26.

The Birth of Jesus Foretold Luke 1: 26-55 NLT

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, 27 to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. 28 Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

So first we see Elizabeth, who is Mary's relative, is six months pregnant and the Angel Gabriel appears to Mary. He greets her and says, Mary you are favored and the Lord is with you! Finding favor with God means gaining

approval, acceptance, or special benefits or blessings. This would have caused Mary to wonder why? She was of low status and seemingly a nobody. She was no one special. How many of us can resonate with Mary?

Amazingly, this favor depends on God's good pleasure not in our own merit and is often extended in response to prayer or righteous living.

The greatest favor Mary received is the Lord's presence. The angel declares the Lord is with you. Now remember up to this point the Lord, the promised Messiah has not come. And yet, the proclamation is that he is with Mary. It's no wonder she was confused. We would all be confused. Let's continue reading...

29 Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. 30 "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.

Okay, so again Mary hears she has found favor with God. How? She is described as lowly which meant low in status or low in importance. We know God is in the habit of doing things opposite of what would be expected in this world. Typically, those who find favor with God in the Bible are not usually the affluent or high in social status, but rather, those who live in complete surrender and obedience to God.

And now she is learning she will conceive and give birth to a child whose name would be Jesus. The name Jesus in Mary's understanding would have been Yeshua which means "Yahweh Saves" or "Yahweh is Salvation". Although this might have been a common name, it held a lot of significance. Jesus was sent by God for a purpose and his name bears witness to his mission. The Angel Gabriel speaks of this mission in verse 32...

32 He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

This is now referencing the promised Messiah who all new would come from the line of King David. Just as in the Old testament Joshua/Yeshua led his people to victory over the Canaanites, Jesus/Yeshua in the New Testament would lead His people to victory over sin and darkness. At this point Mary is sort of putting it all together and asks an amazing question. She knew that what she was hearing could not happen naturally. Let's continue to read.

34 Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

35 The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.

Okay, so this was like the bomb drop moment, and I love that God in his mercy and kindness builds her faith to believe. The Angel Gabriel uses another miracle to story.

36 What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. 37 For the word of God will never fail."

Turn to your neighbor and say... The word of God will never fail! Hallelujah! Mary was a person of faith and new this to be true. In verse 38,

38 Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

After this encounter, Mary Visits Elizabeth. I like to believe she went to see for herself what she had just been told by Gabriel. Wouldn't you want to go check it out. My family member who was barren her whole life is now with child. Wow! To be barren was a big deal because it was seen as a consequence of some hidden wrong, sin, or flaw. Many women faced much shame and sadness over this. So of course, anyone would want to go and celebrate the good news of pregnancy.

39 A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town 40 where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. 41 At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

With her own eyes Mary sees the truth of what Gabriel spoke of - Elizabeth in her late 80's is indeed pregnant. And then she experience what I've come to describe as a power encounter. She greets Elizabeth and the Holy Spirit anoints John the Baptist in the womb of his mother! Can you imagine what that would have been like? Just being in a room you can feel the tangible presence and power of God released in people, over people and through people.

42 Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. 43 Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? 44 When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. 45 You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

Turn to your neighbor and say, "Mary Believed!" Turn to your other neighbor and say "You should believe too!"

Mary BELIEVED that what she was experiencing was not natural but supernatural.

Mary BELIEVED that she did not earn this favor but it was bestowed upon her by God.

Mary BELIEVED that what the Angel of Gabriel said was true.

Mary BELIEVED that the word of God would never fail.

Mary BELIEVED that she was carrying the very presence and power of the son of God within her womb.

Mary BELIEVED that her son was God's son and would be Yeshua the God who saves. The promised Messiah. Although she probably did not know fully what that meant.

OG: How do you think you would feel? How would you respond with all of that within you?

Mary's response in that moment was one of worship - The Magnificat. A desire to Magnify the Lord. This title of Mary's song of praise comes from the first line of the song in Latin. "Magnificat anima mea Dominum" which means "My soul magnifies the Lord."

To magnify something is to make something appear larger. If you want to see something bigger, you can use a magnifying glass to see it more clearly. When one says they want to magnify the Lord, it is a deep desire to make the Lord bigger! Make who he is in one's life the thing that one sees the most clearly. They want to bring to the forefront all the amazing things God has done. So with this in mind let us read Mary's Song of Praise...

The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise

46 Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

48 For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.

49 For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.

50 He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.

51 His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

52 He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.

54 He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.

55 For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever.”

Mary speaks of her desire to magnify, exalt, and praise the Lord her savior! This speaks of the profound intimate relationship and understanding she is so grateful to have with Her Lord. She then begins to speak of all of the marvelous things he has done in the past and promises to do for His people in the future.

As one who would have learned of the Jewish history she would have been familiar with stories of God’s faithfulness such as God’s faithfulness to Hannah’s story of barrenness similar to her relative Elizabeth’s story of barrenness. Unsurprisingly, the common response to the goodness and faithfulness of God is worship.

Recap Hannah’s story:

- Hannah was married to Elkanah who had a second wife Peninah probably because Hannah could not have children
- Regardless of her barrenness, Elkanah love Hannah deeply
- Hannah deeply hurt wept and pleaded with the Lord to give her a son and made a vow that she would give this child to the all the days of his life
- The Lord answered that pray and after weaning the child she did indeed give the child to the Lord. This child was Samuel who became a significant prophet in the biblical narrative.
- Hannah also praised God in his response to God’s (1 Samuel 2:1-11)

OG: Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11; what similarities or themes can you see when comparing Hannah’s song of praise to Mary’s Song of Praise?

But this idea of worship goes farther back to the beginnings of God’s chosen people. Remember the Lord delivers his people from the oppression of the Egyptians through Moses. If you can recall the epic

moment when the Israelites seemingly were trapped at the Red Sea and the Egyptians soldiers coming for them. My favorite depiction of this story is the “Prince of Egypt”! Moses obeys the Lord and puts his staff in the Red Sea and the power of God parted the Red Sea for the Israelites to pass through the waters to the other side safely and then closed the Sea destroying the Egyptian soldiers!

On the other side, the people of God immediately break out into song of praise!

“Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord. They said, “I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted; he has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” (Exodus 15:1-2 HCSB)

And then if we jump to end of this song of praise at verse 20-21 it says Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women came out following her with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang,

Sign to the Lord for he is highly exalted; He has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea.

Church this is why Christmas isn’t just about some holiday cheer and signing some catchy jingles. Don’t get me wrong... I love me some catchy Christmas jingles! But at the heart of this Christmas season is awe and wonder that the savior king came to earth to redeem and save His people!

You might be thinking yah yah yah! I know this. But, I want to exhort you to deeply ponder this truth this Christmas.

OG: What does his salvation mean for you? What has he saved you from? What is he delivering you from? What promises has he given you through his word that you are believing because his word never fails?

It’s the profound understanding that there is no one or nothing that compares to the magnificence of this God! And that although He is glorious,

he chose us the lowly, the poor in spirit! The ones who have nothing to offer him. We came with nothing and He came with everything! So our response to Him is, at least, extravagant worship!

It's extravagant worship that understands the greatest thing we've gained is Christ himself! This means the inner essence of worship is cherishing Christ as gain - indeed as more gain than all that life can offer - family, career, retirement, fame, food, friends.

In conclusion, Mary's profound encounter with the angel Gabriel and her response through the Magnificat, invites us into this essence of true worship. The birth of Jesus, foretold in divine detail, reveals God's faithfulness and magnificence. Mary's willingness to believe in the supernatural promise granted to her becomes a powerful example for us all.

Mary, a lowly servant girl, found favor with God not through her merit but by divine choice. We find favor with God, not by our merit, but by his divine choice.

In her song of praise, the Magnificat, she pours out her soul in worship, magnifying the Lord with a heart filled with gratitude. Let our hearts be filled with gratitude for all he has done for us.

She rejoices in God her Savior, acknowledging His mercy, might, and enduring faithfulness throughout generations. This morning and every morning may we rejoice in God our Savior and tell of the wonders he has done to our children so from generation to generation they will praise this Great and mighty God!

Like Mary, as we do this, we uncover the core of worship – a deep desire to make the Lord bigger in our lives. Mary believed in the miraculous, embracing the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Her worship was not a passive acknowledgment but an active declaration of God's greatness.

In our Christmas series, ADORE, we embark on a journey to understand the essence of adoration, moving beyond the superficial expressions of festive cheer. Mary's story teaches us that worship is more than a song or a

ritual; it's a heartfelt response to the goodness and faithfulness of God. It's an intimate connection that goes beyond generations, echoing through the corridors of time.

As we magnify the Lord in our lives, may this Christmas season be a time of deep awe and wonder. Let the Savior's birth resonate within us, prompting an intensification of worship for the New Born King. Just as Mary's soul magnified the Lord, may ours join in a symphony of praise, celebrating the greatness and glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In closing, my story of my first original song - Be Magnified Oh Lord